

## **And Then There Was Eleven by mintgreent**

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**Summary:** Eleven was rescued from the Upside Down by the Chief, she then lived with her mother and aunt Becky. 13 Years later, grown up El meets the boys again.

# And Then There Was Eleven

## The Rescue

That was the deal, find Eleven in the upside down and bring her back to them. No one dared enter that portal except for him now. What wasn't part of the deal was the Chief inconspicuously gathering evidence as he does his nightly routine of looking for Eleven in the upside down. In the weeks leading to the rescue, he was able to gather enough proof; pictures, samples, the names of everyone whose ever worked in the lab. He made hundreds of copies, sealed in envelopes labelled confidential, ready to be sent to every major media outlet across the country. He's trained his men on what to do with those envelopes if one day he goes into the lab and never comes back out.

In the last few days, the chief felt like he was losing hope. Eleven has spent way too long in the Nether. At this point, survival was almost close to impossible. But on the eve of the rescue, the chief dreamt of his daughter, telling him to hang on a little longer. He woke up that day determined that he'd find Eleven. True enough she was there, lying in the blanket fort at the Wheeler's house in the upside down. The chief had looked for her there countless times, and for all those times it remained empty. Today he decided to go for the last time, just one more time. And there was Eleven, barely alive but alive nonetheless.

Before he entered the Portal the chief made another deal, if they keep Eleven captive or kill them both, there will be a media circus waiting outside to feast on the biggest government scandal to date. That day, for the first time in her life, Eleven stepped out of Hawkins lab free and without fear.

## Eleven Doubts

The chief took Eleven to a hospital outside of Hawkins. There, she recovered and was nursed back to health. Once she had regained enough strength, the Chief asked her if she wanted to go and see the boys and Joyce Byers. She answered with a determined "No". Said she'd caused them enough pain. Even after all the love they'd shown

in the short amount of time, the guilt she felt crushed her. The chief reminded her that none of it was her fault, that she was as much of a victim, if not more as the rest of them were. She knew and understood that, but the town needed to heal, to forget; and she would only be a reminder of what had happened to the once peaceful place. She felt that the time she spent with her friends was more than enough of happy memories to last her a lifetime, and for that she was grateful.

### The Reunion

The chief knew what it was like to lose a daughter. He could have easily gone down the path of Terry Ives himself. In fact, he was Terry Ives: Empty on the inside, crazy on the outside. Death of a child would do that to you. Feel purposeless. But Eleven gave him back his purpose, and he vowed to do the same for Terry Ives. She may not have enough life left in her to understand what was about to transpire, but at least now in her heart she will be vindicated.

He met with Becky first. He explained everything. As expected, she threatened to call the police if he dared come near them again. The chief knew that his news would reopen wounds that the sisters took years and years to heal from. But he was adamant to give Eleven a home and bring her back to her family. And so he waited.

In the meantime, the chief explained to Eleven the idea of having a family of her own. A mother and an aunt. Eleven only replied with if her mother would let her eat as many Eggos as she wants. At that point he knew that the lab had fucked up major. Eleven didn't understand yet how much a family should mean to her. But the chief thought that if they boys were able to teach Eleven the value of friendship, enough that she would sacrifice her life for them. Then in time, she will also learn the value of a family's love.

### The Reunion Part Two

It was Becky Ives who contacted him first. She said she had wanted to believe him the first time, but her sister has suffered enough, been damaged beyond point of no return. That the idea her daughter is alive and actually exists would not bring her back. But all those years of doubting her sister, thinking she was crazy, she owed it to Terry to

give her daughter the best life she could.

It was a quiet reunion. Becky shed silent tears as Eleven knelt beside her mother and gently held her hand, who in turn remained unfazed, trapped in her own mind, unaware that her daughter has returned. Eleven said she understands and that she's thankful for the home. The chief said his goodbye with a promise to visit often. And that he did.

### The Years In Between

(Aunt Becky)

Becky Ives stayed true to her word. She provided El the best she could. She was never the doting, sweet mother Terry would have been, instead she was a strict disciplinarian and raised El with tough love. Terry passed away only a few years after El was brought home, and even then Becky remained a loving mother to El in her own unique way.

The disappearance of Eleven had brought so much pain to her sister, but the short while the three of them had spent together in that quiet little home had more than made up for all suffering. El would always tell her how grateful she was for her mother and aunt. In turn, Becky would assure her that no matter where she is in the world, she would always have her home here.

(Mom)

El remembered how she would sit beside her mother silently for hours trying to talk to her with her mind. She learned early on that it was futile, but these silent conversations with her mother were what kept her sane all these years. She would talk to her about her fears and the pain and sadness she endured in that bad place. She realized she had fewer and fewer nightmares then because of them. The silent conversations and the warmth of her mother's hand helped El accept her past and move on.

(Chief)

The Chief came to visit often, at first with endless news about the boys. Later on he realized that it hurt Eleven. She would have a deep

longing look in her eyes and the Chief knew how much Eleven longed to see them. But she was steadfast with her decision. They all needed to move on and forget. And so they would talk about Eleven's progress with school and what she dreamt for her future instead. He was proud of how much El had achieved, and he knew that he doesn't have to worry because she's an intelligent person and can take care of herself.

### 13 Years After

(Eleven)

El glanced back at her childhood room one last time. The first time she packed away the contents of the room was when she went to college, this time it was because she's all grown up now and ready to be on her own.

In the years after her mom died, reading books became her solace. Those authors became her heroes, and that's how she came to love writing herself. She would spend hours writing short stories and book reviews. Once, she wrote a long detailed critique of Eggo's and sent them to the company, in turn she received a gift card for a month supply. It was through her writing that she was offered a monthly book review section in a literary magazine in Boston.

Aunt Becky asked her why she needed to move so far away to Boston, that if she wanted to move to a big city, there's plenty in the neighbouring states. She's unsure and confused herself why but ever since she graduated from college, all the decisions she's made thus far somehow led to her landing a wonderful job in that city. It was never in her plans to move there, but it's as if the universe conspired in helping her achieve it (quote taken from The Alchemist- no copywrite infringement intended).

(The Boys)

They're all grown up now. They're still quintessential geeks and nerds. In fact they even made a career out of what they love. Will went into Graphic Design, both Lucas and Mike went on to become Software Developers, and Dustin just graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering.

The truth is, they've been grown-ups for a long time now. After what happened all those years ago, they were never the same. For the first couple of years it was everything they ever talked about. It was the most exciting thing that's ever happened in their lives! They're adventures with El, Will's survival inside the upside down, how scary that monster was. They obsessed over MK Ultra and did tons of research about government experiments and conspiracies, hours and hours spent planning on how they will infiltrate the Department of Energy and then take it down. All the while there were sleepless nights and nightmares left untold. As the years wore on, the reality of what happened on that one unforgettable week dawned on them. They tried many times to recreate those innocent days of pre-monster, pre-upside down, pre-Eleven but they've become too old for those little boy games. The trauma has matured them. By senior year of high school, they were all just so eager to get the hell out of Indiana that they applied to universities states away. By college, they promised to keep in touch but eventually drifted apart. All those years they spent away from each other actually helped them heal. They never forgot, will never forget but they all knew that they needed that time apart- to find themselves again, to love what they used to love again. And in that time apart, they grew to appreciate each other even more. They learned that no matter what happened or will happen in the future they're bond will be unbreakable.

(Boston)

It was Mike's idea. He knew it was about time that the boys get back together again, for good. For the first time in a long time they were all back in Hawkins for the holidays. It wasn't as painful as it used to be; home was home again, warm and smelled of Christmas pies. The Wheeler's basement had since been renovated and turned into a home office, and so the boys were all gathered in the living room catching up with their lives when Mike brought it up. Dustin was just telling everyone how he'd gotten a job in Boston. Mike said he's been eyeing a company there and has wanted to move for a long time and now seemed like the perfect opportunity to make a career move. Without much of a protest, both Lucas and Will agreed.

(Chief's Secret)

Of course he knew. He also knew that it was about time. If those boys

and Eleven ever come across each other, it was only fate. Who was he to interfere?

(Mike)

El is back. She's everywhere- corner of the streets, coffee shops, the subway. Everywhere. Mike only caught glimpses of her, but he knew it was his El. And he also knew that the only way this could be possible is if he was going crazy. He kept telling himself that he was just hallucinating. He never forgot about her, his one greatest love. He remembered how in those first few days he would cry himself to sleep and he would dream about El, trapped in the Nether, alone and afraid, waiting for Mike to rescue her. He never told the boys because he could tell that they had nightmares of their own. Those dreams went away eventually but after all these years he could still remember her crystal clear. His memory of El is so vivid that sometimes he felt he could touch her with his mind.

And then he saw her again, this time so close that he could actually reach out his hand to her. He was on the Harbourwalk and she was among the crowd. He followed her up near the water but couldn't will himself to approach her. This time he knew it was more than just hallucination. This person was real.

(El)

There were many people on the harbour that day but El could sense that someone was watching her, following her. The presence didn't frighten her at all in fact she felt safe and calm. And when she turned around, there he was. He was so tall now, and yet exactly as El imagined he would be. Aunt Becky used to tell her stories about love, heartbreaks and failed relationships, and El would laugh about her crazy misadventures. El remembered how her aunt used to tell her that one day she would also fall in love. And now standing in front of this man after so many years, El thought, maybe she already did. Aunt Becky also told her to guard her heart, always. So as much as she wanted to run into his arms, she held her place instead and told Mike that one day when she's ready, she would tell him everything.

(Mike)

They ran into each other everywhere now, but Mike kept it a secret from the others for a while and he also kept his distance. It was the most painful thing he's ever done, knowing El was alive and yet he couldn't be with her. And so he tucked away his pain and his questions and waited until El was ready.

(El)

She now understood what led her to Boston. It wasn't her job, it was Mike. He was there and so the world- the universe knew that she should be there too.

### The Gang and the Weirdo

One day, El told Mike she was ready. The reunion was surprisingly calm. Eleven told them everything, from the time she got sucked into the Nether with the monster, the chief rescuing her from the lab, to meeting her family, college. She apologized for having kept it all a secret, and silently, she apologized for the pain her disappearance had caused. Although the boys had so many questions, they told her they understood. All those lost years have not changed their love for her one bit. She was still they're crazy friend.

Now that El and the boys were back in each other's lives, they were inseparable. And all the while Mike kept his distance. He was too afraid of losing El again and he knew that the only way to make sure she doesn't leave was to give her space. El was grateful for that.

### El and Mike

Mike was the same sweet and caring boy she'd met all those year ago. But he was a lot more guarded now, afraid of being hurt again. He took care of El, not because he had other intentions but he just genuinely and sincerely loved her as a friend. He wanted to make sure that she would never be hurt and alone again, and so he protected her as the rest of the boys did.

For years they remained simply as friends, and in those years, they eventually learned to love each other more than Eggos and blanket forts, more than missed puddings and Snow Balls, more than that one tiny kiss in the cafeteria.